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CHILE: The swing of most Christian Democrats to Salvador Allende virtually ensures his selection as president in the congressional runoff on 24 October.

On Monday, the majority of the national congress of the governing Christian Democratic Party (PDC) voted to support Allende. The group now in control of the party executive carried through a resolution that requires only "agreement" by Allende to a constitutional reform bill to be worked out with his leftist Popular Unity (UP) coalition. Significantly, most of the 75 Christian Democratic legislators voted for the motion.

Anti-Allende forces in the party tried to hold off a decision on whether to declare support for Allende until a PDC-authored bill containing guarantees of democratic freedoms could be passed by both houses of Congress and accepted formally by Allende. These forces included leaders of the party's grass roots--labor, peasant, slum-dweller, and women's groups. President Frei did not use his prestige to help them, although he opposes Allende. The losers are likely to pay dearly, both politically and personally, for their hard fight. The PDC, Chile's largest party and the only possible center of effective political opposition to Allende, seems irrevocably divided.

Until the eve of the PDC congress, Allende's initial refusal to discuss demands for guarantees had increased pressure within the party against supporting him. The UP's vague agreement on 2 October to negotiate swung the majority of the PDC congress, however.

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